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# A GUIDE TO SCHOOL REORGANIZATION IN ILLINOIS

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## PREFATORY NOTE

The administrative reorganization of the public school system of Illinois is a problem that has claimed the energy of a large number of citizens and members of the profession of education alike during recent years. Progress toward the solution of this problem is being made and will probably be made more rapidly in the months and years that lie immediately ahead. There are now almost a hundred county survey committees engaged in the study of their respective areas with a view to making recommendations to the people concerning the task of district reorganization for their counties. It was with the work of these communities in mind that the preparation of this pamphlet was undertaken. It is published by the Bureau of Educational Research in accord with its policy of giving through its publication helpful information and suggestions to teachers, school administrators, and citizens interested in the problems of education. The Bureau of Educational Research in publishing this report believes it is rendering assistance to those who are concerned with this very important task of reorganizing the administrative structure of the public schools in Illinois.

WALTER S. MONROE, *Director*  
Bureau of Educational Research



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## INTRODUCTION

ILLINOIS has more school districts and more school board members than any other state in the nation. The majority of the districts overlap one another, and many districts have more board members than school children.

The necessity for school reorganization has been recognized for many years, but actual progress in efficient reorganization has been slow. In 1945 the Illinois legislature enacted the County Survey Law. This law, among other things, made possible the creation of county survey committees to promote a more desirable school organization within their respective counties. Ninety-three of the 102 counties in the state have created survey committees. Some of these committees have already submitted their reorganization proposals to the State Advisory Commission; others are still in the early stages of their studies.

This bulletin has been prepared for the use of survey committee members, school administrators, and all citizens who are interested in improving their schools. It attempts to clarify the problem, show what other states are doing, point out what educational research has to contribute, and finally set up a list of criteria as guideposts to effective reorganization. It is designed, first of all, to be of assistance to committee members and administrators in formulating and reshaping specific reorganization proposals. Furthermore, it is designed to provide information for the use of both professional and lay people in making intelligent decisions regarding school reorganization. The final approval of reorganization plans rests with the citizenry.

It is always advisable to have a mutual understanding of the terms used in any discussion. Therefore, for the purpose of this bulletin, the following definitions of commonly used terms will be employed.

*Administrative District vs. Attendance Areas:* An administrative district includes all of the area under one governing body. An attendance area is the territory which is served by a particular school center. One administrative district may include several attendance areas, as in most Illinois cities. In the typical Illinois one-room school district, the attendance area and the administrative district are the same. We are so accustomed to this arrangement that we tend to think of reorganization in terms of keeping the attendance area and administrative district identical. Now, it is obviously true that one school board can administer several schools. In fact, as we shall see later, this is a more efficient arrangement.

*Reorganization vs. Consolidation:* These terms are sometimes used synonymously, but in most of the literature and in much of the thinking throughout the state they have different meanings. For the purposes of this bulletin reorganization will refer to the alteration of administrative districts; consolidation will refer to the merging of attendance areas. A reorganized district may include several consolidations or none at all. Consolidation may have to await favorable road conditions, school building programs, etc.; reorganization need not. Thus, reorganization is the proper function of the survey committee; the new school boards elected in the reorganized school districts will eventually effect the consolidations.

*Economy vs. Savings:* By economy in school administration is meant the maximum service for the money expended. A saving is an actual reduction in money spent. All authorities agree that a sound school reorganization will bring about economy, but in most cases there will probably be no actual savings. It would be misleading to the people and probably disastrous in the long run to lead them to believe that there will be a reduction of school expenses. Present school needs are so great that very probably more money will be spent for schools in the future. However, such increases will be due to factors other than reorganization. Nevertheless, we can confidently expect to get more for our money under an efficiently organized system.

*Instructional Efficiency vs. Administrative Efficiency:* In studying the shortcomings of our schools, care must be taken to differentiate between administrative efficiency and instructional efficiency. Efficient instruction is the goal. It is obstructed by inefficient administration. Instruction in a school without a library or laboratory will be inefficient; insufficient supplies and equipment make for ineffective teaching; failure to take into account physical handicaps of children increases school failure. Administrative efficiency does not guarantee instructional efficiency; but where administration is inefficient, instruction is bound to suffer.

There are many studies pointing out the lower achievement records of rural pupils as compared to city pupils. However, when we list the causes for those deficiencies, we will find that there are few causes which proper administrative reorganization can not eradicate. In the last analysis the scarcity of teaching equipment, shorter school terms, poor attendance, lower level of teacher training, and general unattractiveness of rural education are due primarily to the administrative organization.

*Intermediate Unit:* The intermediate unit is a more or less loosely defined connecting link between the state and the local district. All states organized on a district basis have some such supervisory agency in some degree responsible for the underlying districts. In Illinois it is the county, represented by the elective county superintendent of schools. Also in Illinois the school township through the trustees and treasurer may function as an intermediate supervisory unit. Actually the trustees have more legal power than the county superintendents, but lack of professional guidance has caused the township to cease to function as a school unit except in a few specific legal matters.

*Unit System vs. Dual System:* By a unit system is meant an administrative district including all school grades under one board of education. By a dual system is meant the prevalent organization in Illinois of separate school boards and school districts for the elementary school and the high school within a given community.

## CHAPTER I

### THE CHALLENGE OF SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

THE SCHOOL reorganization movement in Illinois is a source of hope to serious students of the Illinois school system and alert friends of the rural schools in particular. The opportunity for a grass roots study of local school organization should go far toward securing a better public understanding of school problems, and the recommendations of the survey committees may well mold the structure of our educational system for many years to come.

The duties of the committees, briefly summarized, are threefold:

1. To study the county for the purpose of recommending educational reorganization that will (a) improve educational opportunity, (b) make school administration more economical and efficient, and (c) more equitably distribute educational revenues.
2. To inform the residents concerning proposed school reorganization and be informed by them.
3. To define the boundaries and nature of the proposed reorganization and report the same.<sup>1</sup>

In fulfilling the task imposed on them by law, it is inevitable that the committees will be confronted with many broad educational problems. These problems may not be directly involved; yet they have an important bearing on the work of the committee. Such problems are as follows:

1. The inadequacy of our state revenue system.
2. The present shortage of qualified teachers.
3. The inadequacy of legislation to encourage and facilitate reorganization.
4. The limited state program of financial support of schools.
5. The lack of state provisions for long-range study of reorganization problems.

On the other hand there are a number of problems which the survey committees may deal with effectively and in so doing contribute significantly to the improvement of the education in the state. Such problems are as follows:

1. The inadequacy of most small high schools.
2. The inequity of the non-high-school districts.
3. The inefficiency of the dual system of districts.
4. The ineffectiveness of the outmoded township unit.

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<sup>1</sup> Nickell, Vernon L., *The School Code of Illinois*, Office of Public Instruction, State of Illinois, Circular Series A, Number 26, Springfield, 1945, p. 350.

5. The unfairness of the distribution of taxable wealth among districts within a county.

### The Task of Reorganizing Schools Is Complex and Difficult

The long struggle to expand the school system in Illinois within the framework of the constitution has resulted in a maze of law unintelligible to laymen. In 1938 the Governor of the State said, "A topsy-turvy patchwork of school laws relating to educational organization, administration, financing and tax limits confronts [the legislators]. They face an impenetrable jungle."<sup>2</sup> One survey committee in its preliminary report in 1942 wrote:

Of the 145 school taxing units in the county, 129 belong to the county organization, 18 reach out into the surrounding counties, 16 of them extend into this county from those counties and 8 overlap other districts. There are 217 possibilities of changing materially the total school taxes paid by merely moving across the road or fence line. For all practical purposes there are 13 varieties of school boards; no two high schools in the county have identical legal organizations; most of the people are taxed twice for school purposes.

The many varieties of school boards with their different powers, confused jurisdiction and duties, overlapping one another, extending into the seven surrounding counties, overlapped by districts from those counties make an organization not susceptible to easy analysis with the limited time and funds at the disposal of this committee nor amenable to ready improvement by legislative panacea. Long study and careful planning are necessary if present inadequacies are to be corrected without creating new inequalities.<sup>3</sup>

(Since the turn of the century Illinois has had no less than five state commissions charged by the legislature with the solution of school reorganization problems and several others concerned with financial or educational problems which involved school reorganization. However, the findings of these commissions have resulted in few important changes in the basic school organization of the state.)

### There Are Many Inequalities Among School Districts

The small size of many of our local districts makes possible the concentration of wealth in some and the exclusion of sufficient taxable wealth in others. Some districts are unable to provide an adequate school program even when staggering under an oppressive tax burden, while others escape all but the smallest share of the cost of education. The situation in the oil fields is a good example. There the local taxpayers for a short time may get a rest period from local taxes due to the enormous wealth of the oil properties. But because of the district system the local unit benefits almost exclusively; as a result these

<sup>2</sup> Horner, Henry, "A Report on Educational Problems in Illinois," State of Illinois, Springfield, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> Coles County Survey Committee, *Preliminary Report*, Charleston, Illinois, mimeographed, 1942.

natural resources are drawn off without ever contributing significantly to the support of education in general. At the same time schools adjacent to oil-producing areas are often overtaxed to support the most meager school programs.

For the school year 1935-1936 the Illinois Legislative Council found a variation in ability to support schools in the various districts ranging from 986 to 1.<sup>4</sup> That is, taxable wealth varied to such an extent that one district was 986 times as wealthy per resident pupil as another. In a recent study made by the Bureau of Educational Research at the University of Illinois, a range of 60 to 1 was found in 45 typical high school districts studied.<sup>5</sup> These inequalities are translated into corresponding inequalities in tax rates or educational services or both.

### Taxation Without Representation Exists in Illinois

The non-high-school district board of Illinois is probably the only taxing body of its kind in existence. It has little authority except to approve and pay tuition claims for the students who attend districts operating high schools. Taxpayers in the non-high-school territory, then, have no direct control over expenditures, no voice in the policy of the high schools which their children attend, and frequently, no choice of schools. Community high school boundaries are sometimes gerrymandered in formation in order to take the more desirable taxable wealth from a non-high-school district and leave the less desirable.

The claims for reimbursement from high school to non-high-school districts have been a common source of litigation in Illinois and a frequent source of questionable school accounting. Many non-high-school districts have been in debt, sometimes through sheer unwillingness to levy an adequate tax, and often through inability to meet obligations. Weber has summarized many individual pieces of research, all pointing out the financial instability of the non-high-school district.<sup>6</sup>

In brief, the non-high-school district is undemocratic, since it denies its residents any voice in deciding the type of school for which their money will be spent, is unresponsive to local control, and is not conducive to fair financial practices.

### Rural Children Get Less Schooling

More than half of the school-age children of the United States lived in rural areas in 1940, although only 46.4 per cent of the total

<sup>4</sup> Illinois Legislative Council, *Some Aspects of School Reorganization in Illinois*, Research Report No. 4, Springfield, August, 1938, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Educational Research, University of Illinois, unpublished study of 600 Illinois districts, 1945-1946.

<sup>6</sup> Weber, O. F., *The Problem of School Reorganization in Illinois*, University of Illinois Bulletin, Vol. XXXVI, No. 15, Urbana, 1938.



children enrolled were in these same areas. Three and one-half million children of school age in rural America were not enrolled in school.<sup>7</sup>

The rural child who graduates from high school has on the average at least a year less schooling than the urban child who graduates from high school. Rural schools are open fewer days in a year, and the attendance is less regular for rural children. The average rural child was in school 167 days in 1945-1946 as compared to 181 days for the urban child. In 12 years this difference adds up to about a school year.

In Illinois during the year ending June 30, 1945, the average one-teacher school was open 8.4 months, or 168.18 days, as compared to 9.1 months, or 182.6 days, for schools of two teachers or more. The average pupil in the one-teacher school attended 137.51 days as compared to 152.94 days for schools with two or more teachers.<sup>8</sup> A similar situation seems to prevail in high schools. In the unit systems serving, in the main, independent cities, the high schools were in session 9.7 months, or 194.86 days, as compared to 9.1 months, or 181.57 days, for the community and township high schools which serve both urban and rural areas.

### Rural Children Get Poorer Schooling

The rural people have the responsibility of educating more than half of the children of the nation with 38% of the nation's wealth. In the open country this difficulty is more pronounced; farm people have 31% of the nation's children and about 12% of its wealth.

The character of the education offered to rural children is in keeping with that financial picture. In the year ending in 1942, an average of \$86 a year was expended to educate each rural child in the United States as compared to \$124 for each urban child. The average rural teacher's salary was \$967 as compared to \$1,937 for the urban teacher. Sixty per cent of the teachers in one- and two-room schools had less than two years of training; 30 per cent of those in three-teacher schools had comparable training; 20 per cent in villages under 2,500; and 10 per cent in towns over 2,500.<sup>9</sup> Of the 100,000 emergency teachers in 1945-1946, 75,000 were teaching rural children.<sup>10</sup>

Forty per cent of all the elementary teachers in Illinois, excluding those in Chicago, had degrees, as compared to 5 per cent of those teaching in rural schools. In 1945 three-fifths of the new certificates issued were emergency certificates.

<sup>7</sup> Dawson, Howard A., "Trouble at the Cross Roads," *The White House Conference on Rural Education*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1944, pp. 29-42.

<sup>8</sup> Nickell, Vernon L., *1945 Annual Statistical Report*, Office of Public Instruction, State of Illinois, Circular Series A, Number 33, Springfield, 1945.

<sup>9</sup> Dawson, Howard A., *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Office of Education, "Rural School Charter Day Established," *School Life*, October, 1946, p. 8.

In Illinois in 1940 of all the people 25 years of age or over, the average school achievement for the urban white population was 9.2 grades, compared to 8.4 for the white rural non-farm population and 8.2 for the native white farm population. These averages were lower in all categories for the Negro population.

The present district system makes it virtually impossible for the small local units to offer adequate educational service. In the school year ending in 1945 only 39 of the 11,955 districts in Illinois employed a primary supervisor; only 238 employed drawing teachers; 342 employed agricultural teachers; 576 employed home economics teachers.<sup>11</sup>

Education in our nation has not been available to all on an equal basis. In 1940, 66 per cent of the urban youth from homes of less than \$1,000 income had some high school training; 93 per cent of the youth from homes with incomes of \$3,000 or more had some high school training.<sup>12</sup> The pre-eminence of family financial status as the determinant of school attainment is more pronounced in rural areas, where distance, meals away from home, and other factors enter the picture. The Maryland Youth Survey found that only 1 out of 8 children of farm laborers went beyond the eighth grade as compared to 1 out of 3 children of unskilled urban laborers.<sup>13</sup>

Ninety-eight per cent of the urban population in Illinois have access to library service; only 8 per cent of the rural population have access to such service.<sup>14</sup>

### Rural America Is Moving to the Cities

One of the problems in educational reorganization is the increased mobility of the population. During the twenties, 19,500,000 persons left farms and villages; six million of these persons left farms. During the depression in the thirties the migration declined to 14,500,000, and the net loss to farms was 3,500,000.<sup>15</sup> The war stimulated this exodus from the farms. The Bureau of Census found 152 counties in the United States with an increase of 15 per cent or more in population between April 1, 1940, and November 1, 1943; 317 counties with a net increase of less than 15 per cent; and 2,620 counties with a net decrease for that period. In all but 156 of the latter counties, the decrease was more than

<sup>11</sup> Nickell, Vernon L., *1945 Annual Statistical Report*, Office of Public Instruction, State of Illinois, Circular Series A. Number 33, Springfield, 1945.

<sup>12</sup> Karpinos, Bernard D., and Sommers, Herbert J., "Educational Attainment of Urban Youth in Various Income Classes," *Elementary School Journal*, 42:767, June, 1942.

<sup>13</sup> Bell, Howard M., *Youth Tell Their Story*, Prepared by American Youth Commission, American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., 1938.

<sup>14</sup> Carnovsky, Leon, "Library Service to Rural Communities," *Education for Rural America*, Floyd W. Reeves, editor, University of Chicago Press, 1945, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> Bernert, Eleanor H., *Volume and Composition of Net Migration from the Rural-Farm Population, Population 1930-1940*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Washington, D.C., January, 1944.

the national average of 3.1 per cent.<sup>16</sup> The migration from the farms is shown by the fact that in 1940 twenty per cent of the population lived on farms; in 1944 this percentage had declined to 15 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

When we add to this tendency to migrate the fact that no city in the United States is self-sustaining in respect to population, it becomes obvious that rural America has the manpower pool of the future. It has been estimated that by 1990 eighty per cent of the population will be direct descendants of the people now living on farms.<sup>18</sup> The problems of rural education are not of concern to rural people alone. They are problems for the whole nation.

The number of children under 5 years of age per 1,000 women between the ages of 20 and 44 was 310 for the urban population and 648 for the farm population in 1940. In Illinois it was 294 for the urban population and 532 for the farm population.<sup>19</sup>

### The Township Unit in Illinois Is a Remnant of the Past

The congressional township functions as a school unit through its elective trustees, whose chief function in modern times has been to appoint the school treasurer. There was a time when the township played an important role in founding an Illinois school system. In 1854 the treasurer was ex officio superintendent of the township school system. The trustees still have very broad powers in organizing, altering, and consolidating school districts. Except for an occasional small transfer of land, however, this function has long since ceased to be exercised. The unit fails to serve any modern purpose for the schools, is excessively costly, and all of the functions of the trustees and school treasurer could be more efficiently conducted at much less expense on a county or other basis.

Rural people have long been suspicious of school reorganization proposals, partly because such proposals have been so frequently designed to eliminate the inadequacies of the rural schools while glossing over or omitting entirely any reference to such obvious anachronisms as the township system and our school accounting system.

There are hundreds of thousands of dollars in public school funds in Illinois handled by untrained school treasurers and audited only by county superintendents of schools. Weber found instances of treas-

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, *Map Showing Changes in Civilian Population of the United States by Counties, April 1, 1940 to November 1, 1943 Population*, Special Reports, Series P44, No. 4, Washington, D.C., March 23, 1944.

<sup>17</sup> Schultz, Theodore W., "Farm Income, Migration and Leisure," *Education for Rural America*, Floyd W. Reeves, editor, University of Chicago Press, 1945, p. 49.

<sup>18</sup> Cyr, Frank W., "The Future of Rural America," *Teachers College Record*, 47:110, November, 1945.

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, Newton, "Economic and Social Factors in Planning an Education Program in Rural Communities," *Education for Rural America*, Floyd W. Reeves, editor, University of Chicago Press, 1945, p. 25.

urers' costs as high as \$147.00 per teacher, and 62.3 per cent of the total of instructional salaries paid.<sup>20</sup>

The treasurers' offices are supposedly supported from the proceeds of the permanent or loanable funds surviving from the sale of public lands. In 1927 the treasurers' offices, exclusive of Chicago, consumed an amount equal to 93 per cent of the income of those funds. In 1941 the cost of the treasurers' offices was 247 per cent of their income.<sup>21</sup> The debit balance is deducted from other funds which come to the trustees for distribution.

### The Dual System of Organization Is Out of Line with Modern Education

Originally the high schools in Illinois grew up in various towns and cities as an extension of the existing grade schools. Some of the early consolidations in this state, as in most states, were effected in order to make high school education possible. In 1905 a long series of efforts to establish high school districts began. Many high schools were established under acts later proved to be unconstitutional. Many existing high school districts are the result of a scheme of community districts superimposed upon existing elementary school districts. There are at least seven varieties of township high school districts. These community and township organizations have little, if any, relationship to sociological communities. Moreover, they were established by a majority vote, so that any thickly populated area could create a high school district encompassing more sparsely settled neighborhoods in no wise related by community ties or school interests to the proposed school center. The long battles precipitated by this palpable injustice to the rural people have left scars that handicap school reorganization to this day.

Authorities in school administration have repeatedly pointed out the undesirability of the dual system of schools.<sup>22</sup> Education is a continuous developing process, and artificial breaks in the program are not conducive to best educational results. An adequate guidance program requires that the child be under the same administrative control from the kindergarten through the high school.

### Summary

The problem of school reorganization is a complex and difficult one. It is complicated by a variety of situations. We have seen that the dis-

<sup>20</sup> Weber, O. F., *The Problem of School Reorganization and Finance in Illinois*, University of Illinois Bulletin. Vol. XXXVI, No. 15, Urbana, 1938.

<sup>21</sup> Illinois Chamber of Commerce, *Five Steps in the Right Direction*, Chicago, 1942, p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, Robert C., *Type of School District as a Factor in High School Attendance in Iowa*, Iowa Department of Public Instruction, Research Bulletin No. 23, Des Moines, 1938.

• trict system makes for gross inequalities between localities in the character and cost of education available. Rural America suffers most from the unequal distribution of school income; rural children have less schooling and poorer schooling. This problem is of concern to all, because the rural people are furnishing population replacements for the cities. Migration from the farms further emphasizes the need for school reorganization by reducing local school enrollments.

The school township has ceased to serve a useful function in Illinois. School financial accounting based on the township is in need of revision. A dual system of overlapping districts increases the difficulties involved in correcting the situation.

## CHAPTER II

### LOOKING AHEAD IN EDUCATION

THE FIRST PROBLEM confronting any survey committee is the basic question: What is the purpose of the school districts which it proposes to form? Before the survey committee can reach sound conclusions, it must decide explicitly or implicitly the answer to this question. After all, the formation of district boundary lines and the construction of buildings is merely a matter of implementing a school program. Too long have school finance and administration problems been divorced in the thinking of most people from an essential philosophy of education. The school must be more than a source of facts to be memorized, more than a faithful transmitter of the culture; it must take its place as one of society's several agencies for building a happier, healthier, and more abundant life.

The second problem confronting the survey committee early in its deliberations is embodied in the question: Whom shall the school serve? As a community agency it has an obligation to contribute to the whole community life. Many years ago the high school was added to the school system, recently the kindergarten, and even more recently the junior college. For some years many schools have gone even further and sought to provide education for adults.

These two questions are logically followed by the question: What is to be taught in the schools to be established? To assume that the school of tomorrow will teach what has always been taught is a ready pitfall. In the first place the curriculum has not been the same everywhere. In the second place most small schools have been forced to limit their offerings through sheer inability to teach anything else. And in the third place actual practice has fallen short of established knowledge in curricular practices for many years. An examination of needed corrections in the schools which omitted a consideration of instruction would be a barren exercise indeed.

A consideration of these three questions necessitates a brief study of the curriculum. This is appropriate. No farmer would build a barn without first deciding what was to go into the barn. The services to be rendered compose the first consideration of any planning agency be it a school survey committee, state planning board, or a United Nations charter commission.

## Schools Should Be Close to the People

The prime requisite in a democracy is a school system responsible to the electorate. The immediate interest of the people in their schools is too important to lose. However, this does not necessitate an extremely small school. Schools are closer to the people if they draw from the full community rather than a tiny segment.

The school program is enriched if it deals directly with concrete community problems. More learning takes place in classes concerned with actual community issues than in discussions of remote problems. The schools best serve the children by serving the community. This interdependence of school and community must be kept in mind throughout any discussion of school reorganization.

The instructional program should be based on community need. Rural high schools from which few, if any, of the pupils will attend college have in many cases continued to offer the same type of instruction that an eastern college preparatory school would offer.

*The curriculum of the schools should reflect the needs of the community.*

## Children Must Be Prepared to Adjust to Society Wherever They May Live

The rural school is not training for the rural community alone. Past experience indicates that fully half of the children will later take up residence in cities far from their original homes. The curriculum must then take into consideration not only the demands of the local community, but the needs of those who will have to fit into other communities. There is actually, then, a greater need for a diversified vocational training in the average rural school than there is in the large urban school.

It follows also that there will be a need for special help in choosing courses. If rural children are to enter a variety of occupations, fit into a variety of social organizations, encounter a variety of cultural patterns at variance with their own, then they will have need of a systematic guidance program. A guidance program is an attempt through tests, records, and interviews to assemble the material necessary to understand each individual as a person and furnish him with the information he will need to solve his personal and vocational problems. Such a program is most effective if it is cumulative and continuous throughout the school experience of the child.

The education from the kindergarten through the high school should be under one administration. No more unfortunate psychological ar-

rangement can be arrived at than our prevalent dual plan. During the early stages of pubescence a child will encounter his greatest rate of physical, emotional, and social change. This will ordinarily take place between grades seven and ten in public schools. This is the basic reason for the junior high school. Certainly no more unfortunate place for a break in a child's education could be found than at the end of the eighth grade. If guidance programs are to function, if the child is to get continuous instruction to meet his individual needs, then the educational plan must be continuous from the kindergarten through the high school.

*The district should be large enough to offer a comprehensive program from the kindergarten through the secondary school, capable of meeting the diverse needs of all students and implemented by adequate guidance services.*

### Children Differ Physically, Mentally, and Emotionally

Related to the guidance problem is the extreme deviation in the abilities and interests of children. Hull, using 35 psychological and aptitude tests, found the spread of aptitudes within single individuals to be about 80 per cent of the range of those same traits among individuals.<sup>1</sup> The better pupils within the normal range were found to be between three and four times as efficient on these tests as slower pupils. Pupils have different interests, different backgrounds, different ways of learning, different rates of learning, different problems, hopes, and fears. Some learn well from books; others learn better by doing things with their hands.

Experts are universally agreed that the burdens involved in having one person teaching a variety of subjects on a number of grade levels make it well-nigh impossible for the small school to provide adequately for individual differences. But experts are also agreed that the mere establishment of a graded school system forecasts little for the solution of this problem. The graded schools take care of mass differences a little better than ungraded schools, but individual differences are primarily individual problems. Where small schools have had the trained personnel and continuity of program, they have been in a somewhat better position in meeting this problem. Rural people are offering more than an excuse for opposing reorganization when they protest that their children will be lost in the maw of the educational machine in larger units. In pointing out school deficiencies survey committees can ill afford to overlook the common neglect of the individual in our graded schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Hull, C. L., *Aptitude Testing*, World Book Company, Chicago, 1928, pp. 41-49.



Our new school must provide the facilities for meeting individual differences. This entails a program of finding and measuring those differences as well as dealing with them. It means a research staff, health services, psychological services, testing services, a complete guidance program, a program for exceptional children, skilled teaching, and alert supervision. It means a district sufficiently large and stable to afford all of these services.

*The district should be of sufficient size to afford the services necessary to develop a program adequate to provide for vast individual differences.*

### Exceptional Children Need Exceptional Schooling

Authorities differ as to the exact percentage of handicapped children in the general population. Moreover, exact definitions of types of handicaps vary because of legalistic definitions used in determining eligibility for state subsidies on the one hand and medical or functional definitions on the other hand. About seven-tenths of one per cent of school children are crippled or cardiopathic; about four-fifths of one per cent deaf or hard-of-hearing; about three-tenths of one per cent are blind or partially sighted; about one-tenth of one per cent are epileptic; about two per cent are so mentally retarded as to need specialized teaching; about 3.5 per cent are defective in speech; a small fraction of one per cent suffer from respiratory and other disorders.<sup>2</sup> To all these must be added the growing list of the socially maladjusted. Some two per cent are included under the Illinois provisions for the education of the delinquent, incorrigible, or chronically truant. Recently there has been growing concern for those labelled for want of a better term, "the educationally handicapped." Non-readers of normal intelligence and bilingual children are examples. In addition to all the above categories there is another one per cent of the school population that is extraordinarily gifted. Altogether some ten per cent of all children are exceptional to the extent that they need special instruction with specially trained teachers, sometimes in special rooms.

Illinois has a far-sighted state plan for caring for these children, but districts are generally too small to use the service to the best advantage. If these children are to receive the educational benefits to which they are entitled and which society for its own protection should see that they get, the district organization must be large enough so that each district can economically provide proper instruction for these deviates.

<sup>2</sup> United States Office of Education, "Reports of Study Commissions on State Educational Problems; Exceptional Children," John Haitema, chairman, *School Life*, Vol. XXIX, No. 6, March, 1947, p. 7.

The need for psychological service for the lower elementary grades is becoming increasingly evident. In the past two years, we have discovered in Illinois that our programs for the delinquent, incorrigible, truant, and socially maladjusted in general are suffering because the cases are discovered too late.<sup>3</sup> The same can be said for the programs for the mentally retarded. In setting up a new district structure, some consideration should be given to the probability that our state program for the handicapped children will soon demand that psychiatric and psychological services be made available to every child.

*The district should be of sufficient size to provide a complete program of discovering and providing for the exceptional child.*

### Health Is a School Responsibility

For many years health has been listed as first in the list of cardinal aims of education, but in comparatively few schools has there been a fully developed, adequate health program. An NYA Survey in 1941 found 90 per cent of all youth examined suffering from one or more physical defects.<sup>4</sup>

Early in the selective service program, rejections reached a level of one-third of the 18-year-olds and steadily increased with the older draftees.<sup>5</sup> Of the rejectees one-sixth had remedial defects; even a larger percentage had preventable defects. Later the armed forces had to lower their standards to include cases of congenital hernia and other correctable deficiencies. But even then rejections remained at a level of about one in three.<sup>6</sup> More than half of those examined in the regions with the most poverty-stricken schools were rejected.

Included in this problem of health for schools of the future must be a consideration of the increasing prevalence of mental and nervous disorders under the impact of modern civilization. Five per cent of the population will spend part of their lives in some sort of mental institution. Thirty-five per cent of the 4-F pool as of April 1, 1944, were rejected for mental deficiency, mental disease, or nervous disorders.<sup>7</sup> This enormous waste can no longer be ignored. A positive health program is a necessary adjunct to a sound school system. In particular, numerous studies have pointed out the inferior health services rendered to rural people.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Graham, Ray, "The Illinois Program for the Maladjusted," an Address. Illinois Association of Counselors for the Maladjusted, Peoria, November 20, 1946.

<sup>4</sup> National Youth Administration and Public Health Service, *The Health Status of NYA Youth*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Norton, John K., "Support for Better Schools," *Proceedings*, American Association of School Administrators, 1946, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., p. 130.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> American Association of School Administrators, *Paths to Better Schools*, 23rd Year Book, Department of the National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1945, p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> National Education Association, *The White House Conference on Rural Education*, Washington, D.C., 1944.

*A school district should be sufficiently large to afford adequate mental and physical health service.*

### Curriculum Problems Require Constant Attention

The most cursory examination of the field of curriculum study immediately encounters an obstacle in the sheer enormity of the task. In 1939 Brownell found there had been 3,500 scientific studies of reading and arithmetic alone.<sup>9</sup> Since that time triennial summaries reported in *The Review of Educational Research* show research in the reading field proceeding at a rate of more than 100 investigations a year. Monroe estimated the production of educational research at about 5,000 studies a year on the basis of compilations of "Research Studies in Education" published by the United States Office of Education.<sup>10</sup> It seems evident that no survey committee can hope to become conversant with such an enormous technical literature.

But neither can any school board. This is a job for a specialist in education, in fact several specialists if detailed knowledge of developments in the whole area of curriculum is wanted. It follows then, that if a school is to keep abreast of modern findings in instructional procedures, *the district must be large enough to employ a well-trained, full-time administrator and at least one person who can devote his entire time to the improvement of instruction.*

### The Elementary School Curriculum Should Be Rich and Meaningful

Districts should be large enough to include several elementary attendance areas and facilities for instruction in art, music, handicrafts, and physical education. Complete libraries, visual education programs, auditoriums, gymnasiums, and laboratories should be available to all.

There are values associated with groupings of children large enough to operate complete grade systems which can not be ignored. Interests, abilities, and achievements of pupils vary with age. The social value of permitting children to act in groups near the same age can not be overestimated.

Also only schools large enough to have numbers of children and teachers at one site or very close to one site can afford to have supervision, instruction, and equipment to offer complete instruction in all of the fields a modern program should encompass. Art, for instance, has

<sup>9</sup> Brownell, William Arthur, "Quantitative Research on Teaching and Learning," *School and Society*, 50:847-56, December 30, 1939.

<sup>10</sup> Monroe, Walter S., "Evaluation and Interpretation of Educational Research," *Practical Values of Educational Research*, Official Report, American Educational Research Association, Department of the National Education Association, Washington, D.C., March, 1938, p. 190.

long since ceased to be a "frill"; it is an essential part of the basic elementary curriculum.

Every child should have the opportunity of learning by engaging in wholesome activities with groups of children of his own age and interests. The new school, if it is to keep abreast, must offer the children a chance to learn by doing.

The library is as much a part of the modern school as the desks. A rich variety of instructional equipment, books, magazines, papers, visual education materials, laboratory equipment, and handicraft materials is needed in every school. The cost of a sufficiently broad selection of teaching materials is prohibitive unless the materials serve a large group of children.

*A modern elementary school curriculum does not necessitate very large groups of children under one roof or at one site, but it does necessitate large numbers under one administration if complete services are to be rendered.*

### Secondary School Curriculum Should Be Broad and Vital

The minimum formal curriculum for a senior high school has been outlined by Bachman, Dawson,<sup>11</sup> and others as including (1) English and a foreign language, (2) social studies, (3) mathematics and science, (4) home economics, (5) agriculture, (6) commercial education, and (7) trade training. This minimum arrangement presupposes that music, art, health, and physical education will be handled by teachers in the above-named fields. It further presupposes that the whole gamut of extracurricular activities will be conducted by these same teachers. It would follow then that the barest minimum program in a high school would require at least seven teachers.

Even though the high school has a large enough staff to offer some training in each of the essential fields, it still can not offer an adequate curriculum to meet the varying needs of children from rural communities who as adults will live in a wide variety of cultures. For example, even in the mathematics field there is need for a variety of offerings: college preparatory mathematics, a more general mathematics course for those who will remain in the rural community or similar communities, and a semi-technical mathematics for those who will prepare for careers as semi-skilled technicians.

In recent times we have discovered that the so-called extracurricular activities are often the important agencies in the modern high

<sup>11</sup> Dawson, Howard E., *Satisfactory Local School Units*, Field Study No. 7, Division of Surveys and Field Studies, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1934, p. 29.

school. Sometimes the Camera Club will teach more functional English than the English class; clubs and activity groups often contribute more to democratic living than formal textbook courses. If a high school is to have a well-rounded program including the services mentioned earlier, a staff of 15 teachers and a student body of approximately 300 seem absolutely necessary. Otherwise costs will be almost prohibitive, and provision for individual differences can not be made without losing the value of socialization.

The curriculum of our new schools must exhibit more concern for and a new approach to the social studies. Our knowledge of the physical universe and ability to control the forces of nature have so far outstripped our knowledge of people and society as to leave us in a genuine danger of destroying ourselves and civilization. Realization of the importance of the atomic bomb has suddenly come to every cross-road; the sublime hope that we had won a war has faded, until the most optimistic fear we have merely won a breathing spell until another and more disastrous conflict.

The school of tomorrow then has a fateful responsibility to impart not only the skills, techniques, and habits essential for the preservation of democracy but also the habits and skills of group discussion essential for the solution of social problems. Critical thinking as contrasted to the memorization of facts is of surpassing importance.

The secondary school of the future must lose the selective character which it has retained from the days when secondary education was considered primarily college preparatory. Only about 20 per cent of the high school graduates have been attending college; yet the curriculum for all has been geared to the needs of that 20 per cent. The high school must offer a complete vocational training program and a complete program for citizenship. It must also help children and their parents obtain the special information necessary for wise educational and vocational choices.

Moreover there is an increasing demand for work experience to be integrated with the school curriculum. The NYA program a few years ago taught us a valuable lesson as to the place of work experience. The military training programs established the interesting fact that those without previous work experience learned less rapidly than those with some such experience.<sup>12</sup>

For many years we have recognized the need for parent education in our public schools, but it took the impact of the war to bring this

<sup>12</sup> Tyler, Ralph W., "What Rural Schools Can Learn from the Training Programs of the Armed Forces," *Education for Rural America*, Floyd W. Reeves, editor, University of Chicago Press, 1945, p. 143.

need to general public attention. We declare family life to be the cornerstone of our civilization. Certainly the major adjustment children will be called upon to make is in the founding of homes. Yet we leave this whole area to haphazard instruction, while still requiring algebra or English literature of high school graduates.

Recently nine states have established departments for parent education; ten other states include this part of education in a larger phase of adult education. Eighteen states are definitely attempting to give service in the field of adult education through the public schools.

There have been great strides toward broadening the curricula of small high schools. Their situation is not hopeless. However, the larger school with a larger faculty has a much better opportunity to meet new demands, offer instruction broad enough to meet the needs of all, and provide all the necessary facilities at a reasonable cost.

*The variety of subjects offered, the need for community-centered activities, and the growing importance of the so-called extracurricular activities demand a high school of at least 300 pupils. }*

### **The Total School Curriculum Is a Growing, Living Thing**

During the past seventy years, the common schools of Illinois have grown from the original first eight grades by adding the high school at the top and the kindergarten at the bottom. A serious study of school reorganization must consider the problem of the availability of education to all children from the kindergarten through the high school.

Recently there have been added in various states and, to some extent in Illinois, two years of junior college beyond the four years in high school. The junior college offers terminal education for those who expect to enter the business and industrial world immediately, and pre-specialized education for those who desire further training. The courses include a general citizenship training for all, vocational training for those who will become semi-skilled workmen, and pre-professional training for those who plan to continue in school.

The School Finance and Tax Commission has recommended that the junior college be made a part of the common schools of Illinois,<sup>13</sup> as has the Illinois Secondary School Principals' Association,<sup>14</sup> the Illinois Education Association, and other groups.

The veterans' training program has given tremendous impetus to the growth of adult education programs in our secondary schools. If the

<sup>13</sup> School Finance and Tax Commission, *State Support of Public Education in Illinois*, Springfield, March, 1947, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Role of the Junior College in Illinois*, University of Illinois Bureau of Educational Research, Circular Number 58, Urbana, March, 1947. Prepared by the Junior College Committee of the Curriculum Committee of the Illinois Secondary School Principals' Association.

veterans in local communities are to enjoy the privileges of on-the-job-training, it is mandatory that the high schools provide technical instruction. The school survey committees have no choice but to take into consideration problems of adult education as long as there exists a large group of veterans seeking additional training. This is true entirely aside from the moral obligation of a school to give service to its adults.

The success of the agriculture and home economics programs in high schools is often attributed in part to the fact that most of these activities interweave adult education with high school instruction. The result is a personalized form of community participation in the school program. Regardless of the merits of intermixing the adult education program with school activities, the community participation in the regular school program is of immeasurable value.

The school is in reality responsive to the community only if there is constant community participation in its activities.

There is no reason why school facilities should not be at the disposal of all in the community who wish to learn. The soil testing equipment used in agricultural instruction should be available to farmers throughout the surrounding area; shop equipment and techniques should be at the disposal of the town's artisans; sociology departments should serve community planning groups; commercial departments and equipment should contribute to better business practices in the town.

*Administrative units should be large enough to permit the development of a well-rounded, adequate, community education program.*

## Summary

Schools based on the modern concept of education require a professional administrator, supervisors of instruction, specialists necessary to provide for exceptional children, guidance services, health services, broad choices of subjects in the high school, and opportunities for adult learning. Such schools presuppose an organization with all grades under one administration.

All these services imply a large district, probably a larger district than other considerations might dictate.

## CHAPTER III

### SCHOOL ORGANIZATION IN OTHER STATES

(THE SCHOOL reorganization movement is almost as old as the Illinois Public School System.)<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts had school reorganization laws as early as 1838. In 1882 the district system was abandoned in that state, although the same local attendance units were kept. Consolidation began in the state of Ohio in 1892. The movement for a county school unit in Utah had its beginnings with the first report of its first State Superintendent in 1896, shortly after the admission of the state to the Union.<sup>2</sup>

This long history of the struggle to form better school units has built up in many states a rich heritage of experience from which Illinois can profit. Accordingly an attempt is made in the following pages to trace the development of school reorganization in several states where significant progress has been made in rebuilding the structure of the public schools. Factors which have tended to retard or obstruct sound reorganization are also pointed out as they appeared in these states.

#### School Organization in the United States

Twenty-six states, including Illinois, are organized on a district basis. None of them has as many individual districts, and only a few of them have districts superimposed on other districts as does Illinois.

Eleven states depend generally on the county as the basic school district. These states are Florida, West Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Virginia. The eleven states with county unit districts average 120.8 districts per state.<sup>3</sup>

Nine states — Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Vermont — use basically the school township unit as does the northern peninsula of Michigan. It should be noted that the town unit in New England is firmly rooted in the traditional pattern of general government and further that most of the states adhering to the town unit are more thickly populated than Illinois. Indiana, the only midwestern state in

<sup>1</sup> The tax feature of the first Illinois Public School Act of 1825 was repealed in the 1826-27 General Assembly except as taxpayers consented to support free schools. The Act of 1855 instituted the first state-wide compulsory school support. Grimm, L. R., *Building the State Common School Fund*, Illinois Education Association, Department of Research, Springfield, September, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> First Report, State Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah, 1896, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Dawson, Howard E., "Progress in School Reorganization in the United States," an Address, *Illinois Conference on Rural Education*, Springfield, March 15, 1947.



the group, has found the township unit too small for economical administration.<sup>4</sup>

One state, Delaware, which is about the size of one county in the larger Western states, has a state organization. With the exception of one city and fourteen special districts the state of Delaware is considered as one school district under the state board. This includes 142 attendance areas.

One state, New Mexico, has no general basic pattern of organization, although sometimes listed as a county district state.

The twenty-six states organized on a district basis average 18 square miles of area per district; the nine states on the township basis average 28 square miles in area per district; the eleven states organized on a county basis average 377 square miles per district. In Illinois the average district is 4.64 square miles in area.<sup>5</sup> In this connection, it should be noted that the majority of the districts are dual arrangements with districts superimposed on others.

The states organized on a county basis include attendance units of different types within the various districts. Utah, for example, has had a mandatory county organization since 1915 and has had permissive county school districts since 1905. Yet 7.2 per cent of the schools are still one-room schools, due to the isolated conditions in the area served by such schools. West Virginia, another county unit state, decreased the number of one-room schools about 30 per cent in ten years; and it is planning to decrease still further the number of one-room schools with its postwar building program.<sup>6</sup> However, it is not contemplated that all the one-room schools can be abolished in a few years.

Only two states, Florida and West Virginia, are organized exclusively on a county district basis. The others have retained independent urban districts (generally larger cities) separate from the jurisdiction of county boards of education. This has remained a chronic problem. Even though a city is of considerable size, the community interest immediately surrounding it can not be divorced from that city. This is particularly true if the distance to another community center is great.

The patterns of reorganization vary from state to state according to local constitutions and the original impetus bringing about reorganization. Consolidated attendance units rather than reorganized administrative units is the general plan. In several states the establishment of attendance areas is the sole responsibility of county boards of educa-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Illinois School Finance and Tax Commission, *Progress Report Number 4*, mimeographed release, Springfield, August, 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Trent, W. W., "West Virginia Council on School Construction," *Proposed Standards for School Construction*, State Department of Education, Charleston, West Virginia, 1944.

tion — Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia are examples. In Louisiana the parish (county) commissioners have primary jurisdiction but must call a referendum if petitioned by 25 per cent of the voters in the proposed new district. In Alabama the mandate fixed on the county board to effect school reorganization requires that consent of the local trustees (directors) must be obtained.

In North Carolina the state commission sets up proposed district realignments with the advice of the county boards of education. In Delaware the state board initiates the formation of all local attendance unit reorganizations. In New York the proposal, originating with the local community, must include a survey approved by the state commissioner before it can be brought to vote by the local people. In California the initiative is generally found in state planning agencies, which in turn depend on the county planning agencies. The Washington plan is similar, having county committees which initiate plans for school district reorganization. When the plans have been approved by the state commission, they may be submitted to the people for a vote.

In several states, notably Wisconsin, New Mexico, and California, the County Superintendent of Schools or a comparable official is required by law to abolish districts below a minimum size.

However, in all cases, the history of educational reorganization indicates that adequate and sustained programs in school reorganization have been developed in the main by two procedures employed separately or in combination. They are reorganization by state fiat as in West Virginia, Utah, and Kentucky; and reorganization brought about by establishing financial incentives for desirable reorganization. Obviously both of these procedures must be based on long-range, state-wide planning. The Ohio and New York financial inducements to reorganization are the best known. In each of them the state provides a special financial program of minimum education for the type of districts deemed advisable. This definition of a minimum desirable school in terms of enrollment, expenditures, teacher training, per capita wealth, and other criteria attempting to measure some of the aspects of desirable education is called a foundation program. When local communities meet the standards they qualify for participation in the state foundation financing program. In New York if a local area prefers an inefficient and costly school, it may have one but must pay for the luxury. However, if a local area desires to form a more efficient school system of the character outlined by the state, it participates in a special state financial program designed to establish such districts. In California and New York a reorganized district qualifies for state equalization payments in

such a way as to guarantee in addition to other grants the same amount of money that would have been available to the original several districts.

It is also worth noting that in each of these successful state plans the reorganization of the school districts has been carried out over a long period of years. Ohio began reorganizing its districts in 1894. The present program began basically in 1914 and has been gradually improved since then. By 1929 the number of one-room schools had been reduced 51.3 per cent. In 1935 the Foundation Program of special financial inducements for sound reorganizations began. Periodically since, the state authorities have found it necessary to require new county surveys. They are now conducted every two years.

It is interesting to observe that there is a tendency for districts, once reorganized, to persist. Writers from Arkansas, Texas, New York, Wisconsin, and Michigan note such a tendency. This means in a state like Illinois, where the reorganization is just beginning, that it is exceedingly important that the initial steps be far-reaching and soundly conceived.

Almost universally in states which have progressed far in achieving a sound school reorganization, a large portion of the school support comes directly from the state. In West Virginia at the same time that the legislature abolished all school districts and established a county unit, it fixed the basic law shifting the bulk of school support from local sources to state sources. In New York, California, and Ohio the foundation program for a reorganized district is very heavily financed by the state. Likewise in North Carolina, Kentucky, Delaware, Washington, and Louisiana the state contributes heavily to local school support.

Caution must be exercised in using the proportion of state support as a measure of an enlightened state policy toward education. Many states furnish a large portion of school funds and, at the same time, limit drastically the levying of local taxes. In other states the apparent economy of larger units, as shown by lower per-pupil costs, may really be niggardly school support. Also much of the apparent far-sightedness of some states with a high percentage of reorganized districts is in reality the result of desperation arising from a sad financial plight. Illinois lags in school reorganization; but it does not necessarily follow that the total educational system in Illinois is equally backward.

The states organized on the township basis are finding that the township is not sufficiently large to furnish an economical and comprehensive administration. Indiana has made a recent beginning to change its township organization to a county system. Ohio abandoned

the township organization in 1914; West Virginia abolished the township unit in 1935.

In states where revision has taken the form of consolidated attendance units rather than large administrative districts encompassing several attendance areas, it has been found necessary to greatly strengthen the county administration or other intermediate unit in order to provide those services which can not be given economically except in a large over-all unit.

In California, where the state foundation program has encouraged the establishment of consolidations into relatively small attendance units, the county superintendents' offices have been enhanced to furnish, largely at state expense, directors of visual education, supervisors, health services, library extension services, expert accountants, building supervisors, and the like. In New York, the state is set up in supervisory areas to encompass all districts too small to employ complete administrative staffs. Over these is placed a district superintendent. In New Jersey, this intermediate supervision is supplied by the state with professional civil service employees, each in charge of areas comparable to several counties.

### School Reorganization in Selected States

*California:* Until 1891 universal free public education in California was limited to the elementary schools. In 1915 free public high school districts were added, and in 1921 junior colleges. These types of school organizations were under different boards until 1935 when a means of forming unified districts was provided. Now two-thirds of the children are in such unified districts.<sup>7</sup> The state apportionment of funds gives all unified districts the same minimum funds they would have had as individual districts. Until recently, however, the state had not fixed definite goals for reorganization as has New York. In 1945 under the impact of the vast migration to the state during the war, state and local planning commissions instituted an intensive study of the school system. State school planning has been linked with state economic, social, and political planning; local school planning with community planning. Recommendations of the survey staff have included special equalization formulas for reorganized districts, the fixing of minimum standards of reorganization, continued long-range planning, and the final approval of local proposals by referenda.<sup>8</sup>

*New York:* School reorganization began in New York as early as

<sup>7</sup> Dawson, Howard E., *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Strayer, George D., editor, *The Financial Support of Education in California*, State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, Sacramento, California, June, 1945.

1853 with the authorization of the Union Free School District, primarily intended to make it possible for growing towns and villages to expand more rapidly and improve their schools. Under its provisions some districts consolidated into Union Districts built around villages and towns.

In 1914 the Central Rural District was authorized to provide a means for rural districts to reorganize. Extensive state-wide studies from 1914 to 1922 failed to achieve a state-wide proposal for reorganization but resulted in a revitalization of the law to provide financial incentives for reorganization. State aid has been found to be the most effective means of achieving desirable districts. The reorganized district is entitled to all of the state aid which would have accrued to its component districts, all of the quota for a Union Free District, and, in addition, to half of the transportation expenses of the new district and one-fourth of the building costs contingent upon the levying of a qualifying local tax.

The local community initiates proposals to reorganize, but plans and proposals must be approved by the State Commissioner before being brought to a vote. The new district must be a sociological unit; state authorities furnish expert assistance for the survey which must be made to determine the proper unit.

The result has been a continuous program of gradual reorganization. The rate of reorganization has steadily accelerated; there were 65 new units formed in the five years ending in 1930, 83 during the next five years, and 120 during the five-year period ending in 1940.<sup>9</sup> Also the size of the new districts has gradually increased. In 1924-1925 the new units encompassed 3.6 former districts, in 1930-1931, 12.6, and in 1938-1939, 16.1 former districts. Average size increased from 26 square miles to 70 square miles, and the total number of districts was reduced by 3,126. By 1946 a total of 338 centralized districts had been formed from an original 5,000 smaller districts.<sup>10</sup>

One of the significant results of the New York type of district has been the increased community participation in school programs. New York has encouraged the formation of districts on the basis of natural community lines, and it has furnished the local communities with much expert help in defining community lines and conducting community surveys. In that state, with the formation of the new districts, better facilities and better trained personnel are available to integrate the

<sup>9</sup> Butterworth, Julian E., "A State Rebuilds the Schools of Its Rural Areas," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 14:411-21, March, 1941.

<sup>10</sup> Schmidt, A. W., "The New York Plan of Rural School Reorganization," an Address, *Illinois Conference on Rural Education*, Springfield, March 14, 1947.

school program with community life, and community interest in the school has grown.<sup>11</sup> This is in direct contrast to the popular notion that school reorganization results in loss of local interest in the school.

Another interesting accomplishment has been the greater holding power of centralized districts. Formerly 50 per cent of the children dropped out of school at the end of the eighth grade. In the centralized districts only 37 per cent fail to go on to high school. West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio report similar experience with larger units.

*West Virginia:* In West Virginia the township and district organizations were abolished in 1933 when the depression had so impoverished the local schools as to threaten to close many of them. Between 1935 and 1940, 30 per cent of the one-room schools were eliminated.<sup>12</sup> The average size of elementary schools was increased. With the addition of transportation at public expense the enrollment in high schools was increased 59 per cent. At the same time per capita transportation costs were lowered by the more efficient routing and planning possible in a larger district. The percentage of high schools smaller than 100 decreased from 30.4 per cent to 8.3 per cent. The percentage of the population in high schools increased from 9.7 per cent to 18.2 per cent. The percentage of teachers having at least two years' training increased from 49 per cent to 88 per cent. The percentage of daily attendance increased from 86 per cent to 91 per cent. The availability of libraries to schools increased from 56 per cent to 100 per cent. Teachers' salaries increased 25 per cent. Free textbooks and health and professional services were made available to all schools for the first time.<sup>13</sup> During the first year of operation under the county system, over-all costs were reduced 19.6 per cent at the same time that the average school term was lengthened 20 days.<sup>14</sup>

*Utah:* Larger districts were advocated in Utah long before its admission as a state. In 1875 the territorial superintendent urged larger districts;<sup>15</sup> by 1882 all of the city school systems had consolidated. The county unit was advocated in 1881 by territorial educational leaders, and a bill to consolidate districts into county units was introduced in the House of Representatives of the territory. The county unit was urged by the first state superintendent in 1896, and four counties urged the plan in county reports two years later.<sup>16</sup> By 1904 nineteen county

<sup>11</sup> Butterworth, Julian E., *loc. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Cooper, Shirley, *An Evaluation of the County Unit of School Administration in West Virginia*, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1943.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Trent, W. W., *School Reorganization in West Virginia*, State Superintendent of Free Schools, Charleston, West Virginia, 1938, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> Bateman, Edward Allen, *Development of the County Unit School in Utah*, Contributions to Education No. 790, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1940, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

superintendents had endorsed the proposal. In 1905 the first permissive county reorganization law was passed, and within six months two counties had taken advantage of it. In 1915 sixteen counties met the population requirement for eligibility to form county districts, and eight had done so. The legislature that year passed a mandatory county district law, excluding from the county unit only the larger cities. With a large county unit in existence so early in Utah's history as a state, the administrative unit has been able to function as much in establishing the details of school administration as it has in the disestablishment of faulty existing arrangements. As a result some educational authorities rank Utah's school system as the best in the nation.<sup>17</sup>

*Kentucky:* In Kentucky the power to consolidate schools was delegated to the county boards of education in 1913. By 1915-1916 extensive consolidation was under way. In 1946 there were 35 counties with no districts other than the county district; 85 counties excepted from the county unit certain independent districts. Only school districts with at least 250 white children attending school are allowed to continue as independent districts. In common with the other states where school reorganization has made substantial headway, a major portion of school support comes from the state. In 1944-1945 school revenues in Kentucky were 50.41 per cent from local sources, 47.6 per cent from state sources, and 1.99 per cent from federal sources.

*Michigan:* Michigan began reorganization efforts in 1917 with the establishment of its Rural Agricultural District program. Designed primarily to encourage the development of larger units to suit the needs of rural people, this type of district is typically composed of 6.7 former districts and contains 72.6 square miles. Cushman, in a comprehensive study,<sup>18</sup> concludes that reorganization has been slowed down in Michigan by failure of the state to provide adequate financial incentives for reorganization. Contrasting the progress in Michigan with the somewhat similar Central District of New York, she points out that progress has been three times as fast in New York. Moreover, as in Illinois, the abandonment of rural schools has been twice as rapid as reorganization because the state financial plan favors the continuance of the small districts. Her study arrived at the conclusion that 80 per cent of the Rural Agricultural Districts are too small to be communities, and too small for economical operation. Half of them, she concludes, are too small to offer economical transportation.

<sup>17</sup> Hughes, Raymond Mallyneaux, and Lancelot, W. H., *Education, America's Magic*, Iowa State College Press, Ames, Iowa, 1946.

<sup>18</sup> Cushman, Martelle Loreen, *An Evaluation of Rural District Reorganization in Michigan*, Cornell University Thesis, Ithaca, New York, 1943.

*Washington:* The state of Washington has a long history of school reorganization. In 1910 there were 2,710 districts. Continuous study and effort reduced this number to 1,792 by 1932 and to 672 by the end of 1946.<sup>19</sup> Only 13.1 per cent of its public high schools have less than 100 pupils enrolled; 50.2 per cent have more than 300 pupils.<sup>20</sup>

With the appointment of a special state planning council in 1939, the state embarked on a long-range program of further improvement. Two years later a reorganization act became effective which provided for county committees to study for three years, make reorganization proposals, submit them to a state committee for approval, and finally to the public for popular vote. Some reorganization was achieved within seven months under this plan.<sup>21</sup> The present planning proposes 210 districts offering work from pre-school age through the secondary school.

*Ohio:* Like Illinois, Ohio's first districts were formed under a permissive law, and the first mandatory law used the township as a vehicle for organizing districts.<sup>22</sup> From 1853 until 1892 there existed a dual control, with the township as the district, and subdistricts underlying it. Local trustees of the subdistricts so opposed the abolition of the local districts that the law of 1892 abolishing subdistricts did not really become effective until 1906.

The first state aid law in 1906 gave the director of education power to require district boundary changes before school districts could participate in financial equalization. Reorganization begun in 1892 was further accelerated by this requirement, but in 1914 there still remained 9,489 one-teacher schools. In 1913 a state-wide survey was ordered by the legislature, centering in each county around newly formed county boards of education.

By 1936 the number of districts had been reduced to 1,729, the number of one-teacher schools from 9,489 to 2,387. In 1935 a new program of state school finance was adopted. This foundation program provided that the state should guarantee adequate financial support for each child's education and required the county boards to make local surveys regularly recommending district organizational improvements in order that such funds should be spent wisely. During the first year of the foundation program 33 districts were eliminated and 280

<sup>19</sup> Breckner, Elmer L., "Washington Reduces Its School Districts by 937 in Nine Years," *School Management*, 16:27, October, 1946.

<sup>20</sup> Dawson, Howard A., *loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Breckner, Elmer L., "Old Districts Into New," *Nations Schools*, 32:22, August, 1945.

<sup>22</sup> Holy, T. C., "School Reorganization under the Foundation Program in Ohio," *Research on the Foundations of American Education*, Official Report, American Educational Research Association, Department of the National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1939, pp. 122-25.



one-room attendance units abandoned.<sup>23</sup> Additional impetus to the surveys was given by the Federal Project study of 10 states in 1938. After studies in all of the 88 counties of Ohio, long-range plans were adopted calling for the reduction of school districts from some 1,500 to 734, and one-room schools from 1,477 to 7. This program is continuing to fruition at the present writing.

### Summary

The experiences of other states with various patterns of school reorganization furnish helpful lessons for Illinois. Accompanying successful state programs of reorganization have generally been long-range state planning, a large measure of state support, some measure of direct or delegated arbitrary reorganization from the legislature, and state provision of financial incentives for reorganization. Reorganized districts, soundly or unsoundly based, tend to persist. Districts reorganized on a community basis increase community interest in schools. Districts reorganized on a county basis have been more easily established. Where reorganization has been on less than a county basis it has been necessary for the state or county to provide stronger supervision and the sharing of such services as programs for exceptional children, health, psychological and psychiatric personnel, research personnel, visual education, and other similar essentials which can only be furnished economically by very large districts.

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<sup>23</sup> Holy, T. C., "A Study of Local School Units in Ohio," *Practical Values of Educational Research*, American Education Research Association, Official Report, 1938, pp. 155-60.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH IN SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

SINCE the advocacy of larger school units in 1837 by the nation's first student of public education, Horace Mann, the movement has been a fruitful field for research by educational experts. In studying the findings of research three areas in particular warrant attention in connection with school reorganization: the cost of schools, the type of organization, and the size of the administrative district.

#### **School Reorganization Can Eliminate Wasteful Expenditures**

It is sometimes assumed that school reorganization will accomplish an appreciable saving in school costs. Such a belief may be attributed in part at least to the obvious saving which could be realized by the reorganization and consolidation of school districts in which pupil enrollment is exceptionally small. An example of this situation is contained in a report issued by the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Illinois. The report shows that there are 173 districts in the state with fewer than five pupils enrolled. The average cost per pupil enrolled for those schools was \$378.50.<sup>1</sup> A per-capita cost of \$92.62 for elementary pupils was found by the Research Staff of the School Finance and Tax Commission to be the average in 1944-1945 for foundation (desirable) schools in Illinois.<sup>2</sup> However, the difference between the two figures can not be taken as the savings which would accrue from reorganization and consolidations. Transportation and other factors inherent in the situation would reduce the savings materially. And furthermore, although substantial savings might be realized in special cases such as those indicated in the Superintendent's Report, there are others in which desirable reorganization would bring increased costs. Such a situation is indicated in the same report which shows 250 one-room schools with enrollments of 32 or more pupils and a per-capita cost of \$60.33. Any reorganization providing these districts with an adequate educational program would doubtless involve an increase in cost.

It was estimated in 1934 that the national expenditures for public education were from fifty to sixty million dollars more than they would

<sup>1</sup> Nickell, Vernon L., *Per Capita Costs of One-room Schools in the State of Illinois for the Year Ending June 30, 1946*, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Statistics, Springfield, December, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> School Finance and Tax Commission, *Progress Report Number Three*, mimeographed, Springfield, August 23, 1946, p. 6.

be if wasteful small schools were eliminated.<sup>3</sup> Numerous studies in Illinois have argued that school reorganization could lower the state tax burden. Studies made under the auspices of the Tax Commission<sup>4</sup> and the Illinois Chamber of Commerce have been widely interpreted to mean that school reorganization will bring about actual dollar savings.<sup>5</sup>

In a comprehensive study of 223 reorganization surveys in the United States it was found that over-all costs would decrease in 213 of the counties surveyed and increase in 10. For the whole group an average decrease in costs of 7.83 per cent was found.<sup>6</sup> For reorganizations involving only rural schools the average decrease was found to be 9.2 per cent.

This study found that schools cost 1.36 times as much, on the average, as they would if no elementary school contained less than 290 pupils and no high school less than 726. The new buildings would add 3.8 per cent to the over-all cost of the new districts.

In West Virginia during the first year after the abolition of the district system in favor of a county system over-all costs were reduced from \$23,258,924 to \$18,690,214.<sup>7</sup> Reorganization in Wisconsin, reducing 423 districts to 139, resulted in operational savings of 20.85 per cent between 1939 and 1942.<sup>8</sup>

An Oklahoma study<sup>9</sup> envisaged a saving of \$1,500,000 a year if schools were reorganized. This study found that one-teacher schools spent 30 cents per pupil a day as compared to 20 cents per pupil a day for six-teacher schools. A California study<sup>10</sup> made at the same time predicted savings of 7.4 per cent, exclusive of building costs, if schools were reorganized.

A proposed regional realignment of district boundary lines in Utah to make districts correspond to geographical and topographical boundaries anticipated savings of 25 per cent.<sup>11</sup> A New Jersey study

<sup>3</sup> Gaumnitz, W. H., *Economies through the Elimination of Very Small Schools*, U.S. Office of Education, Bulletin No. 3, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934, Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup> Hicks, H. S., *The One Room Schools of Illinois*, Illinois Tax Commission, Springfield, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Illinois Chamber of Commerce, *Five Steps in the Right Direction*, Chicago, 1942.

<sup>6</sup> Little, Harry A., *Potential Economies in Reorganization of Local School Attendance Units*, Contributions to Education, No. 628, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1934.

<sup>7</sup> Trent, W. W., *School Reorganization in West Virginia*, State Superintendent of Free Schools, Charleston, West Virginia, 1938, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> State of Wisconsin, *Thirtieth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1940-1942, Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin, 1943.

<sup>9</sup> Oklahoma State Department of Education, *Study of Local School Units in Oklahoma*, Oklahoma City, 1937.

<sup>10</sup> California State Department of Education, *Study of Local School Units in California*, Sacramento, California, 1937.

<sup>11</sup> Hansen, George H., *A Regional Redistricting Plan for the State of Utah*, Brigham Young University Studies Number 5, Utah University Press, Provo, 1937.

recommended the reduction of 222 districts in 8 counties to 38 districts with an anticipated savings of \$8 per pupil enrolled.<sup>12</sup>

There are a number of studies purporting to show higher per capita costs in reorganized schools.<sup>13</sup> However, none of these studies compare the same schools before and after consolidation, but rather compare consolidated schools with other schools.<sup>14</sup> But even studies of that sort would not be conclusive, since economic cycles make comparisons over a period of years difficult.

Most of the studies agree that reorganization will reduce costs if the same program is offered before and after reorganization. Earlier studies and studies by other than school men generally concluded that extensive savings could be made by reorganizations. Later studies by educational authorities are generally agreed that the savings effected by reorganization and consolidation will generally be absorbed by new services and other improvements in the educational program.

In all studies of costs it must be borne in mind that actual figures are outdated since World War II. It is estimated conservatively that the national income will level off at some 80 per cent higher than before the war.<sup>15</sup> This means that the cost of education will have to seek a comparable level in order to maintain the same service that has been given. Estimates made by the National Resources Planning Group during the war while not envisaging as high a standard of national income as authorities do now, estimated that to offer the services the postwar world needed school expenditures on a national scale must be doubled.<sup>16</sup>

With the certainty that regardless of any reorganization effected, school costs in Illinois will be much higher than they were before the war, it is in order to plan the school organization in such a manner as to achieve the utmost economy and yet provide an adequate educational program.

The cost of transporting pupils is a vital consideration in planning school reorganization. In Illinois pupil transportation costs have been unduly high. In 1944-1945 the annual cost per pupil transported was \$44.67 in Illinois, \$14.00 in Michigan, \$16.16 in Iowa, \$23.36 in Ohio, \$29.74 in Indiana, and \$20.12 for the nation as a whole.<sup>17</sup> A major reason for the high cost in Illinois is the district system which makes bus route planning over large areas impractical and encourages over-

<sup>12</sup> Kaser, Louis J., *A County Unit Plan of School Administration for Eight Counties in New Jersey*, mimeographed by the author, Burlington, New Jersey, 1938.

<sup>13</sup> Little, Harry A., *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Norton, John K., "Support for Public Education," *Proceedings of the American Association of School Administrators*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1946, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> Illinois Education Association, *State Aid for Pupil Transportation*, Research Department, Springfield, 1946.

lapping and sometimes competing bus routes. Bus routing over large areas is more efficient. In a recent report the annual cost per pupil in the nine states organized on a township basis was \$38.13 as compared to \$15.19 in eleven states organized on a county basis.<sup>18</sup>

The average annual per-pupil cost for transportation in Illinois was fourth highest in the nation in 1944-1945.<sup>19</sup> Proper reorganization should reduce this high transportation cost to a sum comparable to expenditures in Ohio. If new districts are small, however, transportation will remain costly. In both Indiana, organized on a township basis, and Ohio, on a reorganized district basis, recent efforts have been made to transfer bus routing to a county plan as an economy measure.

Transportation costs vary not only with the size of the area over which busses are routed, but with the density of the population, condition of the roads, topography, ownership of the vehicle, per cent of utilization, bus miles per square mile of area served, number of trips per bus, and other factors.

So important a factor is the density of the population that several states include a variety of measures of population density, such as pupils per bus mile and bus miles per square mile, in the formulae for state reimbursement. There is no avoiding the fact that it costs more to bring education to a very scattered population just as it costs more to bring electrical service and mail service to such areas.

Most authorities report economies when the districts own the busses, or even the bus bodies; almost all agree that these economies are substantial when school systems are large enough to buy busses on a fleet basis.

### The Unit System Is More Efficient

Among authorities there is practically universal agreement on the superiority of the unit system, or district maintaining all grades through the high school under one administration.<sup>20</sup> The advantages of this type of district in meeting the needs of the children have been noted. In addition the unit system holds the children in school better by eliminating the sharp break at the end of the eighth grade. It allows for economy in the use of buildings by permitting the shifting of classes to take advantage of unused space, savings in transportation by eliminating duplicating service, economies in the use of equipment such as visual aids, savings in purchasing by permitting buying in larger

<sup>18</sup> Ohio School Survey Commission, *Report to the Governor and the 96th General Assembly of Ohio*, Columbus, 1945.

<sup>19</sup> Grimm, L. R., *State Aid for Pupil Transportation*, Illinois Education Association, Springfield, June, 1945.

<sup>20</sup> Morphet, Edgar L., "Implications of School Reorganization," *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 11, p. 199, April, 1941.

amounts, economies in the use of specialized personnel such as nurses, supervisors, guidance experts, accountants, clerks, engineers, and research directors.

The School Finance and Tax Commission found that of 69 Illinois unit systems studied, 55 of the elementary schools and 65 high schools met the criteria set up for foundation schools. Moreover they found average high school costs in unit systems to be \$140.45 per pupil as compared to \$195.17 for separate districts. Elementary school costs on an average per-pupil basis were found to be approximately the same in each type of district. The exact figures given are \$82.63 per pupil in unit systems and \$82.00 in separate districts.<sup>21</sup>

So universally has it been recognized that the decrease in numbers of the unit systems in Illinois constitutes a distinct educational loss that the legislature recently provided inducements for the formation and preservation of unit districts. These districts qualify for special equalization funds upon a levy of .375 per cent of the valuation, whereas other districts qualify upon a levy of .25 per cent each or .50 per cent for both elementary and high school districts. It is probable that this qualifying rate should be lowered further to encourage the formation of the unit type of administrative district.

The current teacher shortage is a potent argument for the establishment of unit systems or 12-grade districts. The students prepared in elementary education who will graduate from Illinois teacher-training institutions this year would barely suffice for the normal replacements of the city of Rock Island. Indications are that the shortage of elementary school teachers may grow even more acute in the next five years.

Until salaries and job satisfactions in the elementary school are comparable to those in the high school there is little hope that young people will elect to train for that field. The unit system offers the best means of achieving a salary schedule applicable on the same basis to all with equal training and experience throughout the twelve grades.

The acceptance of the unit system as most desirable still leaves us with the question of what geographical area such a unit shall encompass. Shall it be a sociological community or a political subdivision of the state?

### The Community Is a Natural School District

Sociologists in general have urged the community as the unit of school organization on the grounds that the school and community are

<sup>21</sup> School Finance and Tax Commission, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

inseparable and that either loses its vitality without the other. Moreover, curriculum experts almost universally stress the importance of school-community participation in developing the school program and other community welfare projects.<sup>22</sup>

A certain difficulty lies in the definition of a community. It is easy to read into the contention of the trained sociologist one's own definitions of a community. What the layman considers a community is generally termed a neighborhood by the sociologist.

Sociologists define a community as an area which is able to sustain the necessary services and the chief interests of life and make them available to all parts of the area.<sup>23</sup> A neighborhood includes some of these essential services but belongs to a larger community for other services. A village of 300 with several stores, churches, and social organizations commands a loyalty that is termed community spirit; locally the people call it a community. But the village people go to a larger center for much of their trading, their banking, medical service, and dental service. This is the true community center. The village is a neighborhood. It can be readily seen that the line between a neighborhood and a community becomes hard to define in towns of from 1,000 to 3,000. Many of them will have most of the services essential to a community, but few of them will have all such services.

That a community most frequently coincides with a high school attendance area, as most rural sociologists agree,<sup>24</sup> is a generalization hardly applicable to the present situation in Illinois, where high schools with less than 100 pupils actually represent neighborhood areas. In terms of school organization a neighborhood is usually suitable for an elementary attendance area; but a community will generally include several neighborhoods and is usually suitable for a high school attendance area.

Moreover with modern transportation facilities the actual community or area in which a family feels personal responsibility, loyalty, and interdependence is broadening. The social process of consolidation has outrun legal enactment.<sup>25</sup> The war has hastened this process. Cooperation has been of the essence. The academic concept of the size of a community must look to its laurels if it is to keep pace with social developments; the school organization must anticipate widening community horizons if it is to contribute to community growth.

<sup>22</sup> American Association of School Administrators, *Paths to Better Schools*, 23rd Yearbook, Department of the National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1945.

<sup>23</sup> Brunner, Edmund Des, "Rural Education Sociological Aspects," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, Walter S. Monroe, editor, Macmillan Co., 1941.

<sup>24</sup> Sanderson, Dwight, *Locating the Rural Community*, Cornell Extension Bulletin, No. 413, Cornell University, 1939, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Brunner, Edmund Des, *op. cit.*, p. 955.

Most authorities agree that wherever possible school districts should follow community lines. The danger lies in underestimating the size of the community or in sacrificing school efficiency where present community boundaries are too small.

### The County Is a Convenient School District

School districts are political divisions of the state. The town or township and the county are the traditional agencies of local government. During the early days of the establishment of the school systems these were the most frequently used units for state supervision. The natural development of the township as a school district was forecast for the states in this section even before the adoption of the Federal Constitution, when the Ordinances of 1785-87 provided for the surveying of the Northwest territory and dedication of the 16th section to educational purposes. Early efforts to control the district system and consolidate schools inevitably seized upon these existing units as desirable. The first State School Superintendent in Massachusetts urged the town unit, the first in Illinois the township unit,<sup>26</sup> the first in Utah the county unit.<sup>27</sup> The southern states traditionally relied on the county as the principal unit of government; as a consequence they have found it easier to effect school reorganization.<sup>28</sup>

The county is the largest political subdivision of the state and its adoption as an administrative district simplifies the educational structure. During the past century a voluminous maze of statutes, court interpretations, and legal precedents have been built around the existing school structure. Survey committees in Illinois are discovering the baffling legal entanglements involved in the formation of a simple unit system from parts of existing high school, elementary, and non-high-school districts involving more than one whole township.

Like the English language and Topsy, our school system "just grew up." It would not be difficult to fashion a better finished product if only we could start from the beginning. Since this is impossible, some of our best educational authorities have urged that the most expeditious means of eliminating the errors of the past and legal intricacies of the present is to go directly to a county unit. This would leave only 102 units in Illinois for later correction and refinement rather than the 9,000 or more which still exist.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, Ninian W., *Report of Superintendent of Public Instruction*, 1855. Reprinted in 1909 Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield, Illinois.

<sup>27</sup> Bateman, Edward H., *Development of the County-Unit School District in Utah*, Contributions to Education No. 690, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1940.

<sup>28</sup> Cubberly, Ellwood P., *State School Administration*, Houghton Mifflin, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1927, pp. 139-270.



Many counties in Illinois would make satisfactory administrative units;<sup>29</sup> others would make acceptable interim units. Moreover the mere fact that the county may not be desirable for permanent school administration would render the unit from its beginning flexible and subject to constant revision and adaptation. This is an important consideration. We have noted elsewhere the tendency of small reorganized districts to persist. In Illinois with the present unprecedented bonding power we are in grave danger of solidifying in new buildings inadequate, short-sighted consolidations around which local pride may crystallize to perpetuate uneconomical units.

### The Township District Is Undesirable

Little can be said in favor of the congressional township as a basis for a modern school system in this state. It does not conform to community boundaries, is generally too small for an adequate administrative district and would involve the maximum legal technicalities in establishment. Existing district boundaries have long since ceased to conform to township lines.

Those states which adopted a township school system in the days of poor roads and large rural school enrollments are finding the township inadequate for a modern school system.

### The Population Size of a School District Is of Fundamental Importance

Studies have shown that larger high schools give superior service at significantly smaller costs.<sup>30</sup> Not only are costs greater for the same service, but small high schools frequently give inferior service.<sup>31</sup> An investigation sponsored by the United States Office of Education in 1932 pointed out that high schools under 150 generally have inadequate teacher-pupil ratios, teacher salaries, curricular offerings, guidance programs, extracurricular programs, instructional equipment, library facilities, and provisions for individual differences.<sup>32</sup>

In order to arrive at the size of a satisfactory school unit Dawson<sup>33</sup> lists the services a school should have in the way of supervision and administration, the cost of the program at conservative estimates, the percentage such service should be of the total school budget, by divi-

<sup>29</sup> Pulaski County Survey Committee: *Preliminary Report*, 1947.

<sup>30</sup> Seyfort, Warren C., *School Size and School Efficiency*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937.

<sup>31</sup> Riddle, John L., *The Six Year Rural High School*, Contributions to Education No. 737, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1937.

<sup>32</sup> Ferris, E. N., Gaumnitz, W. H., and Brammell, P. R., *National Survey of Secondary Education*, Bulletin No. 17, Monograph 6, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1932.

<sup>33</sup> Dawson, Howard A., *Satisfactory Local Units*, Field Study Number 7, Division of Surveys and Field Studies, George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1934.

sion arrives at the total budget, and thence at the size of a unit which could economically give such service.

Allowing 40 pupils per elementary teacher and 30 per high school teacher, Dawson concludes that to operate an adequate administrative unit with maximum economy a school population of 9,800 would be required. He included in the administrative staff a professional superintendent, attendance officer, accountant or business manager, general supervisor, director of research, supervisors of music, art and writing, classes for exceptional children, health, manual arts, household arts, physical education, nurses, supervisors of buildings and grounds, and a librarian. If this staff were reduced to the minimum of a superintendent, two clerks and a nurse-attendance officer, he found the district would need to have 1,600 pupils if the costs of administration and supervision were not to be disproportionate.

This is the classic study of its type. Its basic logic has never been challenged. If the school is to offer all of the services listed for Dawson's standard district — and in 1947 we would add to rather than subtract from his list — it must be very large or bear a disproportionately heavy cost for administration and supervision.

This study presumed that the cost of administration and supervision would be about 7.7 per cent of the total operating costs of the schools. Further studies have been made of the relationship between the size of local units and adequate general control. The cost of adequate administration has been found generally prohibitive in districts employing less than 30 teachers, about eight per cent of the total budget in districts employing from 30 to 39 teachers, seven per cent for from 40 to 69 teachers, 5.5 per cent from 70 to 99 teachers, and 3.5 per cent in units employing more than 210 teachers.<sup>34</sup>

In actual practice units employing less than 50 teachers seldom provide adequate general control; superintendents are frequently uneconomically employed at clerical work, and the leadership is seldom skilled and continuous.<sup>35</sup>

The Educational Policies Commission agreed that an adequate school program at minimum costs would necessitate an administrative unit of from 10,000 to 12,000 pupils.<sup>36</sup> Units of this size have been advocated for Illinois.<sup>37</sup>

The Illinois Department of Finance<sup>38</sup> recommended administrative

<sup>34</sup> Priscoe, Blonzo O., *Size of the Local Unit for Administration and Supervision of the Public Schools*, Contributions to Education No. 649, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1935.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Educational Policies Commission, *The Structure and Administration of Education in American Democracy*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1938, p. 36.

<sup>37</sup> Hall, Earl R., *Administrative Unit for Illinois*, published by the author, New York, 1939.

<sup>38</sup> Illinois State Department of Finance, *State Aid to Schools in Illinois*, Springfield, 1939.

units of 1,600 pupils comprising areas of at least 50 square miles. The Griffenhagen reports to the Governor's Commission of 1931 recommended from 400 to 500 community districts in the whole of down-state Illinois.<sup>39</sup>

The Advisory Committee to the Governor's Commission of 1935, while recognizing the necessity of gradual change, felt that the first step toward the evolution of better units of local school administration in Illinois was the immediate creation of county units.<sup>40</sup> The committee urged that the multiplicity of vested interests in the state and the tangled legal aspects of the existing school structure necessitated such a step.<sup>41</sup>

An Indiana study indicated that factors affecting the economical operation of schools included the size of the school, pupil-teacher ratio, density of the population and limitations on transportation. For conditions prevalent in Indiana it concluded that an attendance area should have a radius of about 8 miles, include from 200 to 250 square miles, and yield a pupil population of 1,100 elementary and 460 high school pupils. This study recommended desirable minimum attendance units of 220 for the first six grades, 280 for the first eight grades, 400 for a four-year high school and recommended a maximum traveling distance of 15 miles.<sup>42</sup>

A study designed to investigate the factors operating to bring about innovations, new functions, and improved practices in schools discovered that districts with more than 86 teaching units were most likely to initiate improved procedures and that those with more than 55 teaching units were more likely to adapt to meet new needs than smaller schools.<sup>43</sup> On this criteria of adaptability, then, schools with about 650 in the high school and 1,600 in the elementary school have the best record; schools with about 400 in the high school and 1,000 in the grade school show a definite superiority to smaller schools.

The Illinois School Finance and Tax Commission in its study of 930 Illinois high schools found costs rising sharply with enrollments declining below 300. They concluded that elementary attendance areas below 100 and high schools below 300 were exceedingly expensive in terms of educational values received.<sup>44</sup> An analysis of data collected

<sup>39</sup> *Report and Recommendations of the Illinois Commission on Taxation and Expenditures*, January 24, 1933.

<sup>40</sup> Illinois Educational Commission, *Report of the Advisory Staff*, Springfield, 1936.

<sup>41</sup> The altering of high school boundaries has proved as difficult as their initial creation. There have been almost as many unconstitutional acts to provide means of changing boundaries as there were unconstitutional acts in establishing Illinois high schools.

<sup>42</sup> Holmstedt, Raleigh W., *Factors Affecting the Organization of School Attendance Units*, Indiana University School of Education Bulletin, Vol. 8, No. 3, Bloomington, 1934.

<sup>43</sup> Mort, Paul R., and Cornell, Francis G., *American Schools in Transition*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1941, pp. 125-28.

<sup>44</sup> Illinois School Finance and Tax Commission, *Progress Report Number Three*, mimeographed, Springfield, August, 1946, pp. 8-9.

by the commission shows that high schools with enrollments of 300 or less cost on the average \$207.69 per pupil enrolled for the year ending in 1945; those from 301 to 500 cost on the average \$144.47 per pupil enrolled. The disparity was somewhat larger in schools found to meet the Commission's criteria of a foundation program. The median cost of high schools below 100 qualifying as foundation schools was \$285.42 in that year; for those above 300, \$145.92. Another significant fact indicated by the data was that beyond the level of 300 enrolled there was little significant difference in costs between superior schools and others. The New York Regents Inquiry reached similar conclusions.

In an exhaustive investigation the New York state board concluded that an enrollment of about 300 constituted the minimum desirable high school. Below that figure the study concluded that costs increase and the curriculum tends to become restricted.<sup>45</sup>

This study including some eleven volumes of carefully gathered data is one of the most dependable analyses of school costs, efficiency, and progress. None of the very small schools, regardless of costs, were found to measure up to superior standards, and among larger schools little relationship was found to exist between costs and school superiority. The research staff concluded that no amount of money will make it possible for districts which are too small to give a thoroughly satisfactory education.<sup>46</sup> The studies recommended high schools of from 300 to 2,500 and elementary attendance areas of from 180 to 600 pupils,<sup>47</sup> saying that no high school with much fewer than 300 pupils can be good except in one or two phases of its program.<sup>48</sup>

The National Commission on School District Reorganization in the latest major summary of school reorganization findings concludes that the minimum desirable enrollment for high schools is 75 per grade level.<sup>49</sup> It also recommends elementary school attendance areas of 300.

## Summary

The evidence indicates that if districts are reorganized into units of adequate size, substantial economies may be accomplished which will mean better service for the money expended rather than reduced expenditures.

<sup>45</sup> Grace, Alonzo G., and Moe, Gustave A., *State Aid and School Costs*, Regents Inquiry into the Character and Cost of Public Education, New York, 1938.

<sup>46</sup> Gulick, Luther, director, *Education for American Life*, Regents Inquiry into the Character and Cost of Public Education, Maple Press Company, York, Pennsylvania, 1938.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

<sup>48</sup> Spaulding, Francis T., *High School and Life*, Regents Inquiry into the Character and Cost of Public Education, McGraw-Hill Company, New York, 1939, p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> The National Commission on School District Reorganization, *A Key to Better Education*, Washington, D.C., 1947.

There is overwhelming evidence pointing to the undesirability of the dual system of schools; there is virtual agreement among experts that grades 1 through 12 should be under one administration. The preponderance of current expert thought favors the community unit. It seems accepted that the county unit is the easiest to establish, is the most satisfactory interim unit during a transition to a better system, and is the most economical district in planning transportation or supervisory services.

Research indicates that maximum efficiency and economy is obtained in districts serving from ten to twelve thousand pupils. In many instances some efficiency must be sacrificed to maintain essential community participation in the school program. Moreover, an adequate state equalization plan renders the size and wealth of the district less important.

From the evidence, 300 seems to be the minimum acceptable enrollment for a modern high school. Under conditions prevalent in Illinois, a total school population of 1,000 pupils in grades 1 through 12 should yield a high school of that size with the greater pupil-holding power of the unit district.

The size of the elementary school is less generally agreed upon; in fact, the elimination of long traveling time and the establishment of a large administrative district are considered much more important than the actual size of the elementary attendance area. Most authorities find from 1,200 to 1,600 to be the smallest acceptable administrative unit. Under conditions prevalent in Illinois with the gradually declining population per thousand acres of farm land, 1,000 pupils may be justified as the absolute minimum for a desirable administrative unit.

There is considerable evidence pointing out the tendency of reorganized districts to persist once formed; and much evidence indicating the dissatisfaction that follows poorly planned reorganization.

## CHAPTER V

### GUIDEPOSTS TO BETTER SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

#### Criteria for Determining Administrative Districts

The task of the survey committee in drawing district boundaries is far from an easy one. There are many conflicting interests involved in every mile of boundary line. These interests will be brought to the attention of committee members from time to time and should be given careful consideration. However, the fundamental consideration which should guide the survey committees will always be the establishment of the very best possible administrative organization for the schools of the county.

In many instances in Illinois the county will roughly coincide with the community, broadly conceived. Where this is the case a single county administrative district is clearly indicated as the most desirable school organization.

On the other hand there are counties which contain two or more communities of sufficient size to form adequate individual administrative districts. Often these communities extend into neighboring counties. In this situation a county administrative district may not be feasible. However, no community which contains a school population of less than 1,000 should be established as an administrative district unless unusual circumstances prevail. Both experience and research point out the handicaps involved in operating a high school of fewer than 300 students. Therefore, unless geographic or economic barriers prevent, every district should have a total school population of at least 1,000, of which approximately 300 will be of high school age.<sup>1</sup>

In many cases the task of deciding whether a county should be organized as one administrative district or several is difficult. Many survey committees will confront situations which lie between a clearly indicated county district and an obviously advisable multi-district organization. In such cases there is imperative need for complete information and intelligent consideration of all factors.

The following criteria are offered as guideposts for survey committee members and others as they formulate and consider various plans of school reorganization and the problems which are involved.

1. *The survey committee should recommend an administrative organization which will provide for the soundest long-range educational program which can be devised.*

<sup>1</sup> The high school population figure is based on the 8-4 grade plan which is prevalent in Illinois. As a minimum figure, however, it applies to any type of organization.

The question arises whether recommendations should aim for the best improvement which the committee can envisage or be adulterated to conform to a pattern which seems to be an improvement of some degree and likely to meet the approval of the voters.

It would indeed be unfair, unwise, and presumptive for a survey committee to recommend any but the best reorganization program it can devise. Unfair, because it would deprive the voters of the privilege of voting in favor of the best reorganization program which could be offered. Unwise, because if adopted such a plan would saddle a county with an organization which is admittedly inferior. Presumptive, because such a recommendation presumes that the voters do not know what is best for them and will not approve the soundest organization plan.

Survey committees should not feel that it will be a reflection on their efforts if proposals are defeated. It is almost inevitable that some districts proposed will not be approved by voters at first. However, if the organization plan is sound and the districts adequate in size, approval is almost certain to come in the course of time. Successful operations in surrounding districts of the county which have approved the plan will hasten this development. Survey committees are charged with leadership and may on many occasions be far ahead of those they serve, but if their leadership is wise time will vindicate their judgment and the people will be better served. There seems to be no doubt that a high school of 100 pupils is more desirable than a high school of 40; there seems to be little doubt that an elementary school of two teachers is better than a one-room school. But experience has shown that patchwork corrections which will in turn have to be corrected later, instead of being worth-while improvements, in most cases constitute barriers to the adoption of the ultimate program needed.

2. *Every administrative district should include grades 1-12.* The unit type of organization enables the school to offer a continuous, integrated educational program. It allows for greater efficiency and economy in the operation of schools. It permits the development of a more extensive curriculum and the offering of broader educational opportunities in general.

The unit type of organization eliminates separate high school and elementary districts and also discards non-high-school districts.

3. *The administrative district should be large enough to afford professional administration and supervision at a cost commensurate with other expenditures.* Instructional efficiency depends on administrative efficiency. A modern program necessitates trained supervision not only of instruction, but also in health and other vital community services.

4. *The administrative district should be large enough to enjoy some measure of fiscal independence.* The present program of state aid and equalization makes the size of the unit for fiscal independence vitally important. Illinois has not recently contributed more than 15 per cent from state funds toward the support of schools. This percentage is currently declining under the impact of increased costs and postwar inflation. The administrative district should be large enough to embrace taxable wealth capable of sustaining at least a defensible minimum program. Moreover, one of the major aims of reorganization is the equalization of educational opportunity. This can be done only when administrative districts are large enough to incorporate concentrations of local wealth in the same unit with concentrations of children.

5. *Administrative districts should encourage and maintain the maximum local initiative, interest, and effort.* It has been noted above that only districts with school populations of 10,000 to 12,000 can offer complete educational programs with maximum efficiency, but administration of the school must not become too removed from the people. This will mean intelligent compromise between absolute efficiency and the maintenance of desirable local control. However, care should be exercised to anticipate the widening horizons of community interests. Many authorities recommend two or more communities in one school district in areas of sparse population.

6. *The administrative districts should be formed with due regard for population characteristics.* That is, consideration must be given to such vital statistics as population trends, birth rates, death rates, characteristics of the population, trends in occupational patterns, and trends in school enrollment. For example, in Illinois the ratio of elementary school children to the general population in towns of from 1,000 to 2,500 is 55 per cent larger than the ratio in towns above 20,000. Recent unprecedented increases in the birth rates forecast a rapid acceleration of elementary school enrollments. More stringent child-labor laws effective July 1, 1947, mean higher enrollments in grades 7 through 12.

7. *Administrative districts should be formed with due regard to the facility of transportation.* The future development of many attendance areas will be governed by natural barriers and other topographical conditions. Therefore administrative districts should be large enough to permit economical bus scheduling.

8. *Administrative districts should be large enough to allow for flexibility in the formation of underlying attendance units.* A continued decline in rural population seems probable; but the growth of suburban



areas seems likely to accelerate. The current housing shortage has brought a sudden growth in village and town populations. Administrative districts should be large enough to assimilate the shock of future population shifts.

9. *Administrative districts should be large enough to have a stable, continuous, long-range policy.* The maintenance of such a policy entails not only a district large enough to employ a competent administrative staff, but one large enough to retain the best leadership. Studies have shown that the turnover of skilled educators is too great in school systems employing less than 40 teachers. Also a stable board of education is basic for a sound educational program. Large districts tend toward such stability.

10. *County lines should not be crossed in the reorganization plan unless the survey committees of both counties involved agree on the bi-county district.* It is imperative in such cases that the survey committees involved cooperate in reaching their conclusions. Often it may be advisable to adopt a tuition plan to avoid setting up a district crossing county lines. Joint sessions should be held in order to avoid the pernicious practice of committees issuing conflicting recommendations for the same territory. Careful deliberation rather than a race for territory should characterize the consideration of county boundaries.

### **Criteria for Determining Attendance Areas**

Some survey committees as a matter of tactics prefer to avoid definite commitments as to the exact location of future attendance centers. Since building construction may be impractical for several years, they argue, it is pointless to crystallize the opposition that will be engendered by making positive recommendations where several potential attendance centers present rival claims. Moreover, in the last analysis, such a choice must be made by the electorate of the new administrative district. There is considerable merit in this contention.

Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of possible attendance units must be made before intelligent decisions relative to administrative districts can be reached. Administrative districts should make possible the most economical formation of desirable attendance areas.

The size and location of attendance areas will be determined by the topography, road conditions, density of population, relative isolation of areas to be served, educational objectives of the school, and the utilization of present buildings. In many localities grades one through six may well be kept in one-room schools of about 20 pupils until transportation to larger centers becomes feasible.

In analyzing potential attendance centers in order to arrive at satisfactory administrative districts, a few general principles are offered.

1. *Attendance areas should be so drawn that no small child is on the bus longer than thirty minutes at a time; no junior or senior high school child longer than forty-five minutes per trip.* The law empowers the state superintendent to establish standards for the safety, comfort, and convenience of pupils.

2. *Attendance areas should be such that eventually all children can be enrolled in elementary schools of from 100 to 500 or high schools of from 300 to 2,000.* When road conditions and building possibilities are favorable, new consolidated schools can be built. The larger building is both economically and educationally superior.

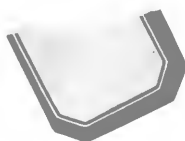
3. *Attendance areas should be planned for the maximum utilization of school buildings and sites for recreation, adult education, and community enterprises of various sorts.* It is poor economy to use public buildings only a few hours per day. Attendance areas should be so drawn that neighborhoods and small communities may use the school buildings as centers for a wide variety of general community affairs. The school has an obligation to the general social life of the area it serves.

4. *Attendance centers should be located so as to necessitate transporting the smallest number of children, and be accessible to the largest number of persons in the general community.* It is obvious economy to locate school buildings so that the smallest number of users, children and adults, will need to be transported. Villages and neighborhood centers form logical school sites. Attendance areas should be planned over the whole administrative district to utilize such centers.

5. *Attendance areas should be formed with due consideration of the density of the population.* Economies in reorganization are definitely limited by the density of the population. Areas of extremely sparse population may need small attendance centers for many years because of transportation difficulties. Population in the open country seems likely to continue to decline. Attendance areas should include village centers wherever possible.

6. *Attendance centers should be planned for maximum safety and the most economical provision of public utilities and sanitation.* Fire protection, electricity and gas service, and safe and abundant water supply, are all factors to be considered in planning future attendance centers. New schools should furnish the maximum health and safety precautions possible.







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